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SUBJECT: DVC on MCA Threshold Program Gets Rave Reviews

1. Post wishes to thank all those in Washington who organized and participated in the March 1 digital video conference hosted by USAID Washington on the Millennium Challenge Account Threshold Program. The DVC received high-level participation here, and key MCC officials in Washington were able to brief GOM officials on the Threshold Program and discuss the current draft of Malawi's Concept Paper in productive detail. The DVC did exactly what was needed at this juncture: clarify for senior GOM officials what the Threshold Program is, what the process will be going forward, and what being an MCA compact country might mean for Malawi in the future. While the officials actively drafting the Concept Paper did not participate, they report that the DVC both enlightened and energized their superiors, who will ultimately be responsible for implementing any proposal developed from the Concept Paper.

2. Mission officers report a very positive response from the participants here, including Minister of Finance Goodall Gondwe, Minister of Foreign Affairs Davis Katsonga and Minister of Economic Planning and Development David Faiti. All were appreciative of the responsiveness of Washington interlocutors in presenting the MCA concept and answering their questions, including Clay Lowery, Kevin Saba and Steve Brent. The DVC appears to have generated significant additional momentum for the Malawi's Threshold process from senior officials who may have been only vaguely aware of it previously. The timing of the DVC to precede A/S Newman's visit will also make her meetings on the topic more productive. The Concept Paper has already undergone revision along the lines discussed in the DVC and will soon go to Cabinet for approval.

3. The following GOM officials participated in the DVC:
Goodall Gondwe, Minister of Finance
Davis Katsonga, Minister of Foreign Affairs
David Faiti, Minister of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD)
Honorable Rodwell Munyenembe, Speaker of Parliament
Victor Mbewe, Reserve Bank Governor
Bright Msaka, Secretary to the Office of the President and the Cabinet
Ishmael Wadi, Director of the Department of Public Prosecutions
Patrick Kamwendo, Principal Secretary, MEPD
Lot Dzonzi, Police Commissioner

Embassy/USAID Officials:
David Gilmour, CDA a.i.
Eric Loken, Acting USAID Mission Director (outgoing)
Eilene Oldwine, Acting USAID Mission Director (incoming)
Bill Hagelman, USAID Africa Bureau (TDY Malawi)
Martha Myers, Program Development Officer
Mitchell Moss, Public Affairs Officer
Bill Taliferro, Economics Officer
Kalinde Chindebvu, USAID Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist

3. It should be noted that this was USAID Malawi's maiden DVC, and was a first for most of our Malawian guests. Putting this together on short notice before A/S Newman's visit and the March 15 Concept Paper deadline required significant coordinated effort, which paid off handsomely. Special thanks go to our USAID Washington hosts, colleagues in the USAID AF Bureau, State AF/PD, our MCC participants and USAID colleagues here in Malawi whose efforts made this possible.

Gilmour